

Pacific Pride

For the Families of Marines and Sailors of the Command Element



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Marines, Sailors pioneer new communications asset

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CAMP PENDLETON, CALIF. - Combining new equipment, ingenuity and Navy and Marine Corps teamwork, Marines and Sailors from the 11th Marine Expeditionary Unit and USS Belleau Wood Amphibious Ready Group successfully conducted a direct video teleconferencing between a land-based unit and a ship at sea for the first time in Naval history April 7.

While ashore during a pre-deployment exercise, Marines from the 11th MEU's Joint Task Force Enabler Detachment, responsible for tactical data communications, conducted video teleconferencing (VTC) with the USS Belleau Wood without the use of the standard satellite dish. Instead they integrated the MRC 142B, an Ultra High Frequency-based microwave antenna, sending both video and sound to the USS Belleau Wood via the Digital Wide Band Transmission System.



"We are the first MEU to have the MRC 142B," said SSgt Heath Miller, technical controller, JTFE Det, 11th MEU. "We just received this new gear in March. Combining the functions of the antenna, the VTC suite and the cooperation of the Sailors from the Belleau Wood, we made this possible."

This capability adds another chapter to the ever-growing digital arena.

"This greatly enhances my command and control ability," said Col Anthony M. Haslam, commanding officer, 11th Marine Expeditionary Unit. "Everyone involved put a lot of effort into the successful validation of the system which can project the digital battle field to wherever I need it."

Typically, the JTFE Det uses a satellite dish to conduct VTC. But due to the requirement for high bandwidth, which is the amount of data that can be passed along a communications channel in a given period of time, conducting VTC via satellite

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From the Commanding Officer



As our deployment nears us, I want to thank the spouses, families and friends for your patience and dedication during our pre-deployment exercises. We recently completed our final evaluation, called the Special Operations

Capable Exercise, on May 10. Marine evaluators from I Marine Expeditionary Force, our parent command, accompanied us on ship for two weeks and evaluated us in our ability to rapidly plan and execute missions from ship and from a forward-operating base. The missions we were tested in varied quite a bit. For instance, one day we provided humanitarian assistance to over 200 "refugees," a.k.a. Marine role players, and the next day we conducted a raid on an "enemy" encampment. SOCEX was a great exercise and the Marines and Sailors of the MEU did an outstanding job. The Commanding General, I Marine Expeditionary Force, has certified the 11th MEU as "Special Operations Capable." All of us in the MEU are very proud of having attained this distinction.

With our final evaluation now complete, we now are in our leave period, affording every Marine and Sailor the opportunity to take some well-deserved time off. Please take advantage of this time together to plan ahead for the deployment in addition to relaxing and enjoying time together as a family. One great opportunity for families before we deploy is Family Day aboard the USS Belleau on June 13. This will be a one-day opportunity to experience ship life as we set sail up the coast of southern California. Be sure to bring your cameras or camcorders in order to capture the beautiful view from ship and the variety of events we

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requires pre-authorization from higher headquarters.

“By using the MRC 142B, we don’t need a satellite to use VTC,” Miller said. “In order to use a satellite, we have to send a request for its use 30 days prior to the requirement. By using the MRC 142B, we can set it up on short notice and transmit data whenever the commanding officer needs it.”

In addition to transmitting video and sound, the MRC 142B can also be used to transmit e-mail, chat sessions and data. It also can support the Command, Control and Personal Computer (C2PC), a computer system that tracks ships, aircraft and troop locations. Despite the functionality of the new antenna system, it does have some limitations.

“The MRC 142B requires a line-of-sight type of transmission,” Miller said. Unlike using a satellite that can transmit almost anywhere in the world by bouncing the signal from satellite to satellite, the antenna needs to be within 33 miles of the target and have no obstructions between it and the ship in order to send and receive data. In fact, in the early stages, the JTFE Det faced some challenges. “We faced many challenges which required professionals from the 11th MEU, USS Belleau Wood and the Space and Naval Warfare Systems Command to meet and work through some of the technology,” said Capt Steven A. Weatherhead, officer in charge, JTFE Det, 11th MEU. “Soon after, the different circuits were worked in quickly and easily, and we realized that the tedious planning had played off.”

While the JTFE Det Marines ashore were troubleshooting, so were the Belleau Wood Sailors. “This was a very involved procedure for both the Sailors and Marines,” Weatherhead said.

The Sailors worked many hours adjusting the configuration of the secure circuitry to match the required settings aboard the ship to those being used ashore. Using an encrypted signal made it even more difficult.

With the major obstacles overcome, the JTFE Det and Navy team are looking for ways to improve their innovation. “We’re looking into building our own Inte-

grated Services Digital Network,” Miller said. “This way we can dedicate more bandwidth, resulting in a better connection and quality of video and sound.”

Combining new equipment with teamwork and ingenuity, the Marines and Sailors of the 11th MEU and Belleau Wood ARG have managed to chart new territory in the ever-expanding world of communications.

“This successful MRC-142B link ashore opens an entire new tactical communications discipline,” said Navy CAPT A.M. Haefner, commodore, Belleau Wood ARG. “The Marines and Sailors are writing the book as we go with this capability, and are true digital pioneers of our future.”

Operation Tiger Cruise

As we prepare for deployment, we also are beginning to plan for our homecoming, and an exciting event called “Operation Tiger Cruise.” Active duty members from the MEU will be allowed to invite friends and family to ride home on the ship from Hawaii back to Camp Pendleton. Spouses, girlfriends, and boyfriends of military personnel are unfortunately not eligible nor are children under the age of eight or those who have health problems that would make it unsafe to board a ship.

Plans for “Operation Tiger Cruise” are in the works. Keep your ears open for more information in the future, to include a sign up sheet for interested guests!

Chaplain Mentzer

11th MEU hotline

The 11th MEU has established two hotline numbers that will connect you to frequently recorded updates of activities once the deployment begins. Call (760) 725-0471 or toll-free (866) 676-0662.

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A message from the **Key Volunteer Network**

Families of Marines and Sailors can count on the Key Volunteer Network to assist them in meeting the challenges of military lifestyle. Everyone knows Marine Corps families have the **toughest** job in the Corps! The Key Volunteer Program exists in order to assist families by providing information, communication and support. The Corps recognizes the military spouses are bright, resourceful and capable individuals. We also realize no matter how many separations or deployments a family has managed there will always be new challenges to meet.

Key Volunteer are spouses of members of the 11th MEU. We want Marines and Sailors to know that their families will have a reliable source to count on when they are in need of assistance. Key Volunteers are your primary point of contact. We work for you with the different elements of the command. By using your Volunteer Network any problem you may encounter will be handled in a most professional manner.

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have scheduled.

Also, don't forget the Tiger Cruise at the end of our deployment. Planning has already begun for this great event where friends and family (unfortunately, spouses/significant others are not allowed) are invited to ride the ship from Hawaii back to San Diego at the end of our deployment. This event requires a lot of prior planning, so make sure you tell your Marine or Sailor to sign you up now! We will provide further details as they become available.

While it is nice to think about the Tiger Cruise and our return, we still have the deployment to focus on. I have said many times that I will do everything I can to keep you, our families, informed of the MEU's activities. I cannot stress enough the importance the Key Volunteer Network and the role they play in providing information to you while we are away; acting as a support network during difficult times; and helping you find solutions to problems that may arise while your spouse is gone. Also, visit the 11th MEU website at www.11meu.usmc.mil for information as well call the 11th MEU telephone hotline at (760) 725-0471 or toll-free at 1-(866) 676-0662. These will be updated as much as possible during deployment to keep friends and family informed on the MEU's activities.

During our workup period, the 11th MEU has received numerous letters of support and thanks from people in small towns scattered across America. While time away from a loved one is difficult, I want you to know that your sacrifices as a military family are appreciated and do not go unnoticed by the American people. Please accept my thanks for all your past and future support, and I look forward to seeing you at the Family Day.

Semper Fidelis,
Colonel Anthony M. Haslam
Commanding Officer, 11th MEU (SOC)

Visit us online @
www.11meu.usmc.mil